CHAPTER-I

BANGLADESH-UNITED STATES
POLITICAL RELATIONS:
Pre-Independent to Mujib Era
Bangladesh was a part of undivided India. After the partition of India it became a part of Pakistan. Pakistan came into existence as a Muslim state in 1947 on the basis of ‘two nation theory’. It was carved out of Indian sub-continent to give effect to the demand of Muslim League's leaders for a separate homeland. But it was not true that Pakistan was created by religious movement. The two nation theory of Mohammad Ali Jinnah actually came out of the fear of Hindu political domination. The religion was exploited by the Muslim League leaders only for their own political aspirations. The movement for Pakistan was political and not religious. As one finds it later that the theory was a failure with the creation of Bangladesh as an independent nation in 1971.

Pakistan was unique in many ways – two wings of the country was separated by a thousand miles of Indian territory. The only feeble nexus between the people of the two wings was that of religion, otherwise the two wings of Pakistan represented different languages, cultures, customs and traditions. The Muslims of the Bengal played a key role in the movement under the aegis of the Muslim League in colonial India. Despite their pioneering role, Bengali representation in the central leadership of the Muslim League movement was scanty. The party at all India level was dominated by
he big landlords and newly emerging Muslim entrepreneurial classes of present Pakistan and other parts of North India.

So when Pakistan came into being, political power was virtually nonopolized by West Pakistani refugee leaders settled there. Agony of the Bengali Muslims was not only confined to the deprivation of political power at the centre. The shrewd maneuverings of the central leadership were successful to push popular Bengali leaders like Fazlul Huq and H.S. Suhrawardy to political wilderness temporarily.

Throughout this period East Pakistan was exploited for the benefit of West Pakistan. A sense of deprivation and frustration began to develop among the Bengalis. This frustration promoted the Bengalis to form their own political organization, the Awami League. This was followed by the proliferation of many other nationalist leftists and secular political organizations in East Bengal. There were also differences of opinion between the two wings over the issue of establishing democracy, according to national status to the Bengali language and distribution of national revenue. The eastern wing wanted democratic system of government, recognition of Bengali, as one of the national languages of Pakistan and proportionate share of national revenue for its development. The Awami League readily grew in strength by successfully using the Bengali discontent against the central authorities. The language issue that is the central government’s determination to make 'Urdu' as the sole state language was crucial to the development of Awami League. As the Pakistani ruling elite was taking more
and more authoritarian turn, the language question became intertwined with the demand for full provincial autonomy for East Bengal. This national movement gradually developed into a war of independence. The war ended with the complete defeat of western wing based Pakistan government in December 1971. East Pakistan then emerged as Bangladesh, a sovereign independent nation-state.

Densely populated and subject to floods and cyclones, Bangladesh is among the world's poorest nations. Bordered by India on the west, north and east and by Myanmar on the southeast, Bangladesh faces in the south Bay of Bengal, an inlet of the Indian ocean known for the ferocity of its tropical cyclones.

South Asia, which comprises of seven nations including three core countries (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh) has been a subject of intense interest and a target of influence by the super powers. Home to one-fifth of the world population, its size, population, military and scientific establishments and its geographical position between the oil-rich Persian Gulf and dynamic economies of East Asia give the area great geographical importance. By virtue of its location, population, "combinations of actual weakness and

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political strength and effort of nation-building". South Asia is an important example of shifting struggles for influence.

The post-Second World War period began with significant changes in the global power structure, which resulted further in changing the power equations at regional level. At the global level, the United States became, "the super power, with its atomic monopoly, whereas the Soviet Union was trying to break the atomic monopoly of the United States. At the regional level, there emerged a number of newly independent nations that had been under the control of colonial powers. Any research that attempts to study the US's relations with any country in the South Asian region should start at least from 1947. Even though India and Pakistan became independent only during 1947, the United States had its representatives in the then British India prior to the independence India and Pakistan.

US and South Asia in late 1940s and 1950s: No Strategic Interest to an Ally

The United States, in that unipolar international system, believed that, "the historical necessity has thrust upon them the burden of responsibility" and "there is nobody else to pick up the torch, if the US fails to carry it". However, the US expected UK to continue its responsibilities of maintaining

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3 James R. Schlesneger, Secretary of the State (Hearing before the Subcommittee on the near and South Asian 93, Congress, 2nd Session, 21 February 6, 12, 14 and 20 March 1974), p.74.
peace and stability at least in those areas, which were earlier under British control. Probably the United States did not find the South Asian region as an important one for its geo-political interests.

In none of the US strategic discussions, neither India nor Pakistan figured at least until late 1949.

The year 1949, witnessed the change in American perceptions of the region following major changes in the global political structure. The year 1949 saw the Soviet Union detonating its atomic bomb, thus ending the short atomic monopoly of the United States. The year also witnessed the emergence of a communist regime in China. With Soviet Union coming at par with the United States, ending a 'short unipolar world' of the post-Second World War period, and with China having the potential to achieve great power status, the United States realized the threats to its global hegemony. Thus these two major events of 1949 along with another major event in 1950 – the outbreak of Korean war – greatly changed and shaped the United States' interest in South Asia. It started showing great interest in the strategic position of Pakistan, in the Indian sub-continent. Only Pakistan appeared to be of geo-political importance.

Nehru's non-alignment policy, India's stand on Korean war, India's perception of the US as an indirect supporter of colonial powers and its refusal to sign the peace treaty at San Francisco greatly irritated the US. At the same time Liaqat Ali made a positive impact on the minds of the American leaders with his willingness to follow the American path towards the global
issues. Now onwards, the US-Pakistan strategic alliance started taking a firm root from then.

By 1952, the changes in the government in both the countries—Pakistan and the United States—facilitated this alliance. In the United States, Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles came into scene, and in Pakistan with the assassination of Liaqat Ali, the power went into the hands of Ghulam Mohammed-Iskander Mirza and Ayub Khan.

The Secretary of the State, John Forster Dulles, a strong proponent of the policy of containment, realized the significance of strategic location of Pakistan for the United States. According to him, "Pakistan occupies a strategic location. Communist China borders northern territories held by Pakistan and from Pakistan's northern border one can see the Soviet Union. Pakistan flanks Iran and the Middle East and guards the Khyber Pass, the historic invasion route from the north into the subcontinent."

Besides, by this time Dulles was convinced of the Pakistani leaders. He stated, "One of my clearest impressions was that of the outstanding and sincere friendship which the leaders of Pakistan feel for the United States...."4

Even before this, Dulles had talked about the importance of military aid to Pakistan, in building a "northern tier of countries" against Soviet Union. In

4 John Foster Dulles, in the hearings before the Senate on Wheat aid to Pakistan, 12 and 15 July 1953.
his testimony in June 1953, he stated, "At the other end you have got Pakistan, which can be a very strong point.... The trouble with Pakistan at the moment is that we do not have any program for military aid for Pakistan...."\(^5\)

The policies of Eisenhower and Dulles led to the military alliance with Pakistan. Therefore, throughout the 1950s, US objectives in South Asia were to minimize Sino-Soviet influence and power in the region as well as to protect its own vital interests in South East Asia and the Middle East, both of which are geographically close to the Indian subcontinent.

These policy objectives drew Pakistan into a close alliance with the US, culminating in Pakistan's entry into CENTO and SEATO in 1954-55. The US, however, argued that it had to give priority to global rather than regional security, and South Asia itself was a low-priority area in the broader US perspective. Pakistan, the willing partner of the alliance, fitted neatly into the American concept of a "bridge" between the Middle East and South East Asia, the two wings of Pakistan were located at the western and eastern part of the subcontinent. From the above reports it is clear that, it was in the interest of the United States, that the mutual defense agreement was signed between the US and Pakistan.

The military aid to Pakistan greatly upset the balance in the Indian subcontinent. Besides it also made any agreement between India and Pakistan complicated. In Nehru's words, "If any military aid comes to Pakistan.... It means that the cold war comes to Pakistan, therefore, comes to India's borders on the West and East on both sides."  

It is important to bring to notice that a section of society in East Pakistan (presently Bangladesh) opposed SEATO and CENTO which were signed by government of Pakistan in 1954-55. The Awami League, which was founded in 1949, underwent a split in the leadership of Moulana Bhasani, on the question of military alliance with the US. When the Awami League leader Suhrawardy became the Prime Minister of Pakistan, he aggressively defended Pakistan's membership in the US alliance system. He even described Pakistan as "the most allied ally" of the United States in Asia. The Awami League was known as pro-American party in the pre-independence period.

Why did the United States choose to have an alliance with Pakistan and not with India? Was it India's refusal to join such an alliance made the

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6 Nehru in Rajya Sabha, 24 December 1953.
United States to choose Pakistan in the region or was it because India did not fit inside the strategic framework of the United States.

There were two different opinions regarding this aspect. The first was that, during the initial period of containment, particularly in the beginning of the 1950s, the United States gave little importance to Pakistan and was "clearly more eager to cultivate friendship with India than Pakistan". However India's refusal to give in for such overtures, coupled with India's opposition to some of the American policies at global level like the signing of Japanese Peace Treaty made the United States to abandon India and choose Pakistan.

The second opinion was put forward by Olaf Caroe, who was a former Governor of the North West Frontier Province of British India. In his thesis, he put forth that India did not figure in the strategic framework of US during that period simply because the geostrategic location of India meant less to the United States. According to him, India is no longer an obvious base for Middle East defense, it stands on the periphery. Pakistan lies well within the grouping of South-western Asia, as such from the air.

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According to some scholars, it was Caroe, who influenced the Americans in the early 1950s to take role in the strategic significance of the location of Pakistan.

However, the nuclear-parity by the Soviet Union provoked the US to consolidate the alliance very fast. Many believed that "American aid relationship with Pakistan might have been of different character from what it came to be, had not the Soviet Union succeeded in breaking the American nuclear monopoly in September 1953."\(^{11}\)

The United States suddenly felt that it was facing an army, "who had more modern jet fighters than they had and enough long-range bombers to attack their country."\(^{12}\) The need for containment and encirclement of the Soviet Union reached its peak. This resulted in signing of Mutual Defence Assistance agreement between Pakistan and the United States on 19 May 1954 in Karachi.

During the second half of the 1950s, there were serious reservations many leaders in the Congress disapproved the United States' attempt to forge an alliance with Pakistan. Besides the clear disapproval by some of the leaders in the Congress, there was also widespread belief inside the


Congress, that Pakistan would be using military assistance from United States move against India.

Besides, the real Pakistani intention being questioned, there was a fear among the policy makers of the United States that the spread of communism in India would be a blow to the United States. It would be a blow to freedom in that part of world comparable to the blow which occurred when the Communist takeover the mainland of China...."

India was seen as a culture, an influence, a prestige in the area which, if it were an asset in the hands of communism, would greatly endanger all the rest of the free countries of Asia.13

It is evident from these reports that by the end of 1950s India started appearing in the strategic framework of the United States. During the same time, American strategic interests in Pakistan were given a serious reconsideration. The United States started asking itself whether its Pakistan's policy towards Pakistan needed a revamping.

The then US ambassador to Pakistan James M. Langley recommended to review the US policy towards Pakistan. According to Langley, "Military strength, without a sound economic and political base does not constitute real strength in South Asia or elsewhere. It is time to rethink

our approach to the Pakistan problem."

Besides, Langley also suggested that, "the present military programme (to Pakistan) is based on a hoax, the hoax being that it is related to the Soviet threat.... United States should recognize its basic premise "the indivisible character of its relations with and interest in the entire subcontinent."14

However, the US did not want to stop the military aid to Pakistan. The reason for this was again its strategic interest. The United States felt that if the military assistance to Pakistan was stopped or slowed down, Pakistan might move away from its anti-communist, pro-West policy.

Pakistan then believed that the change in US military perception was due to pressure from India, and was ready to break the military alliance with the US and look for allies elsewhere.

It was clear to the United States that if the military aid was stopped, Pakistan surely would look elsewhere. At the same time, the United States also did not want to let India come under the communist influence. The US then was caught in a dilemma how to prevent India from communist influence at the same time keeping Pakistan's pro-West policy also intact. The United States thought that this dilemma could be solved by improving the relations between India and Pakistan. The United States felt that by forcing India and Pakistan to evolve a common defense program, the United States could (a)

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14 Langley to Department of State, 1 November 1957, Foreign Relations of United States 1955-1957.
reduce the military aid to Pakistan, since Pakistan was facing threat mainly from India and (b) increase the economic aid to India, without Pakistan making much more about that.

The United States believing that this could be the best solution, pressurized Pakistan to evolve a common defense policy with India. Under pressure from the United States, Ayub Khan on 24 April 1959 suggested that, "in the event of an external threat both India and Pakistan should defend the subcontinent in cooperation with each other." 15

Ayub Khan again in the same year voiced the need for joint defense. 16 However Jawaharlal Nehru rejected the idea of common defense, "I don't understand when peoples says let us have a common defense policy". Against whom. 17

Despite Nehru's rejection, the United States did not leave it like that. They felt that, the United States "ought to pursue it, quietly, ...not with publicity...."

It was because of the extra pressure applied by the United States that the signing of Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan on 19 September 1960 became possible. The agreement was hailed in the United

15 Quoted in Sisir Gupta, India and Regional Integration in Asia (Bombay, 1984), p.37.
17 The Hindu, 6 May 1959.
States as a "development of immense significance not only for Indo-Pakistan relations but for the relations of both the countries with the United States." 18

The beginning of 1960s witnessed India assuming strategic importance in the American framework. Two major factors were responsible for such a change. First, the 1960 presidential elections in the United States, when John F. Kennedy became the President of United States. Kennedy, during the late fifties, was vehemently criticizing the Eisenhower administration's decision to have military alliance with Pakistan. It should be remembered that during 1958, it was Kennedy who supported economic aid to India and introduced an amendment to the Mutual Security Act 1956. Kennedy, wrote White House Advisor Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr's "A Thousand Days", that he "was most interested in India, which he had regarded as the key area in Asia". 19 Besides Kennedy, all those people who occupied top posts during Kennedy's period argued for increasing the importance of India in the US strategic framework. Chester Bowles was the Under Secretary of State; John Kenneth Galbraith was appointed as the US Ambassador to India and Robert Komer was the NSC aide.

The second factor, more important than the first, that made India significant in the strategic framework of the United States was the India-China war, that erupted on 20 October 1962. The India-China war was considered

18 Ibid.
as "golden opportunity for major gain" in their relations with India.\textsuperscript{20} The United States much before the Indian request for the US military aid felt that Indo-China war had brought India to reality, hence would force India to abandon its policy of non-alignment and would seek for US military assistance.\textsuperscript{21}

The NSC Subcommittee on South Asia noted that the India-China war, "can give us a major breakthrough in Asia, provided we can find ways to help India stand firm against the Chinese, without disrupting our relationships with Pakistan."\textsuperscript{22} This resulted in the American military aid to India.

In 1963, the emergence of close relations between China and Pakistan did upset the American strategic interests in the region. By the end of 1962 itself the Americans came to know about the proposed visit of Chou Enlai to Pakistan. Lyndon Johnson in a letter to Ayub told,

Regardless of Pakistan's motivations, which I understand but frankly cannot agree with these actions undermine our efforts to uphold our common security interests in the face of an aggressive nation which has clearly and most explicitly announced its unswerving hostility to West.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20} Komer to Talbott, 24 October 1962, NSC, History of South Asia, National Security of Folder, Lyndon B. Johnson Library.

\textsuperscript{21} Memorandum prepared by the Office of Far Eastern Affairs, 3 November 1962, P. Folder, Trips and Missions, India-Pakistan, Box 533, Harriman Papers, quoted in Robert J. McMohan.

\textsuperscript{22} NSC Subcommittee on South Asia to NSC Files, National Security Folder, John F. Kennedy Library.

\textsuperscript{23} Johnson to Ayub, 9 December 1963, NSC, History of South Asia, National Security Folder, Lyndon B. Johnson Library.
The US relations with both India and Pakistan touched an all time low, with the outbreak of India-Pakistan war in 1965. The use of military items from both sides made the United States to take certain drastic measures in the region. The Congress opposition to any aid to both the countries reached its zenith.

**India-China War and US-Pak Relations:**

To understand the US response in the Bangladesh Liberation War one need to go through the changing dynamics of the US interests in South Asia. The emerging pattern of international relation in South Asia in the 1960s, was determined by Chinese conflict not only with India but also with the Soviet Union. The India-China conflict brought the US President Kennedy, in particular nearer to India, but it, at the same time, drew Pakistan closer to China. The American military assistance, which began to arrive in India in the wake of India-China war, antagonized Pakistan, which now began to consider China as a more dependable ally. The rise of Sino-Pakistan axis brought about a serious deterioration in the relations between the US and Pakistan during this period. But the decline of American influence in Pakistan was not adequately compensated by Indo-US cooperation, because in spite of its dispute with China, India refused to enter US military alliance system.

This stage of international politics in the subcontinent coincided with the period of superpower détente. The interest of two superpowers also converged in South Asia as both were opposed to China and sought to eliminate Chinese influence from the subcontinent. The growing Sino-
Pakistan axis was irritating to the US and the USSR, but both the superpowers tried to maintain good relations with Islamabad, probably to arrest its further drift towards China. Pakistan's attempt towards making China a principle ally was represented mainly by Z.A. Bhutto, who believed that Pakistan had objectives "common with Peoples Republic of China".

The US government, on 8 September 1965 announced its decision to halt arms shipments to both countries – India and Pakistan. The 1965 war between India and Pakistan was significant in the sense that, it made the American policy makers to rethink and reconstitute the American interests and the policies towards the region. The significant question that arose in the minds of the American policy makers in the aftermath of the 1965 war was

"What can we really accomplish in South Asia?
Are India and/or Pakistan worth the investment?"\textsuperscript{24}

The serious thinking of the United States regarding the strategic importance of the South Asian region led it to realize that it had less security interests in the region and Lyndon Johnson came to the conclusion that the US strategic interests in the region were greatly exaggerated. A report by the Near Eastern Affairs, "The India-Pakistan war and its aftermath" favoured to adopt a low profile in the region. This could be seen from the simple fact that Johnson agreed to Soviets, mediating between India and Pakistan. It should

\textsuperscript{24} Komer Memorandum, 16 November 1965, NSC, History of South Asia, National Security Folder, Lyndon B. Johnson Library.
be remembered that following Indo-Pak War of 1965, Soviet Union offered its good offices to arrive at a solution.

After the war of 1965 both the President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India visited the US. But President Johnson's administration made it clear to both leaders that resumption of economic aid would depend mainly upon the maintenance of peace between the two countries and their pragmatic approach to economic and industrial developments. The US also disapproved further military buildup.

But American strategic interests in the region reemerged in the late 1960s. Even though the nature of strategic interests kept varying, or sometimes had more than one, the period was of great significance.

However, it is essential to briefly mention the strategic significance of the region, so that it could give a full picture.

Towards the end of the 1960s, the United States realized that the Soviet Union had acquired military parity with it. Besides, during the second half of the 1960s, the United States witnessed the growing influence of the Soviet Union in the Third World countries, particularly in South Asia. Thus by the end of the 1960s, the United States felt that its influence at global and regional level was declining and increasingly being challenged by the Soviet Union.

After few years, the US reviewed its South Asia policy and finally in 1967 a new arms policy for these two Asian countries was announced.
Through this policy it tried to limit the arm acquisition and to give high priority to economic development. Both the countries under this new policy received $21 billion of economic assistance.

During the period between 1966-69, both India and Pakistan adopted different approaches towards the superpowers. While India was still close to the USSR, Pakistan which was the US military ally, was drifting away from the US and getting closer to China. Pakistan was now in the process of disengaging itself from the earlier military pacts such as CENTO and SEATO.

During 1960s another happening in the world arena was Sino-Soviet dispute which was going toward acute crisis. During that period China was actively providing military and economic aid to Pakistan which no doubt had deteriorated Pakistan's relations with the USSR. Kosygin in his meeting with Yahya Khan said that, "simultaneous friendship with Moscow and Peking would not be tolerated." With the changed policy Sino-Indian relations suffered a blow. Even Pakistan during the post-war period found China more friendly than US owing to its military aid during the crisis.

By the end of 1960s, two significant factors had a bearing on US-Pakistan relations. First, the beginning of the struggle for independence in East Pakistan. Second, the Nixon administration's policy of rapprochement towards China after nearly two decades of bitter hostility.

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The deep sense of frustration of deprivation prevailing in East Pakistan leadership and masses for two decades became overt by the end of 1960s. To bring East Pakistan par with West Pakistan, the Awami League started demanding establishment of democracy, national status to Bengali language and just distribution of national revenue. The people of East Pakistan welcomed the six point program proposed by Mujibur Rahman in 1966, who showed their complete approval in the general election of 1970s. In this election Awami League captured 98 per cent of seats from East Pakistan (167 out of 169) which ensured it a clear majority in the National Assembly. Prospects of the Awami League coming to power at the centre alarmed the central ruling elite and Awami League under Mujib was pressurized to come to terms with West Pakistani leaders. This, in turn, sparked spontaneous mass movement in East Bengal. Yahya flew to Dhaka to hold talks with Mujib ostensibly to buy sometime to launch a military offensive in the East. After a series of negotiations the military regime made the fateful decision to crackdown on the unarmed Bengalis on 25 March 1971, which resulted in brutal killings of civilians in East Pakistan.

Because of this brutality in East Pakistan by the West Pakistani army the Bengalis started taking shelter in India. The Indian government took the matter to the international community particularly to the US to help stop the atrocities of Pakistan army on innocent civilians in East Pakistan. For that

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purpose Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi visited US and Europe. But the US was maintaining its silence on this question and failed to take cognizance of pro-western leaning of the leading organization of Bangladesh liberation movement. As a western observer had aptly described the Awami League as a moderate pro-American and Pro-West that had never been committed to the reorganization of East Bengal social structure.27 Even the people of the US had sympathy with Bengali and criticized the atrocities of army.

Before the army crackdown on 25 March 1971, the Bengalis led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman were confident of American support on the basis of their good relations with US and their pro-American leaning. The pro-American orientation of Awami League had been quite pronounced and the party underwent a split on the question of military alliance with the US and regional autonomy.28 In 1950s, the Awami League leader Suhrawardy during his premiership of Pakistan aggressively defended Pakistan's membership in US alliance system. He described Pakistan as "the most allied ally" of the United States in Asia.29

Even Americans before the crisis of 1971 were often branded as encouraging secessionist movement in East Pakistan. The central

27 Nicole Ball, Regional Conflict and International System (Sussex: ISIO, 1974), p.4.

28 Maniruzzaman, Bangladesh Revolution, n.7, p.37.

government of Pakistan, especially after the Indo-Pak war of 1965, had lingering suspicion about ulterior motives of America in East Pakistan. Even the Awami League of East Pakistan had some financial and political backing of US during 1970s elections.

This period was also marked by the attempts made by Nixon and Kissinger to normalize their relations with China, after its traumatic experience in Vietnam. With East-East Cold War reaching its peak in 1969, China was also on the look out for an ally to counterweigh Soviet Union as the latter had engaged in military buildup on the common Sino-Soviet border.

The US-China rapprochement, stemming from the mutual need, required a third party to provide the contact. Pakistan, now became strategically important for the United States to bring about the much needed rapprochement between the US and China. Pakistan, under President Yahya Khan provided its good offices in establishing initial contacts between both the countries. Having acted as a crucial medium between the US and China, Pakistan received political leverage and patronage from both the powers.

This China initiative obscured the visions of Nixon and Kissinger who quietly engaged in negotiating with Beijing. Nixon's eagerness to negotiate with China heavily influenced the US policy towards the Bangladesh crisis. Kissinger expressed profound gratefulness to Pakistan for its role as the channel to China. He maintains, "we had every incentive to maintain Pakistan's goodwill. It was our crucial link to Peking; and Pakistan was one of
China's closest allies."\(^{30}\) Kissinger's clandestine trip to Peking took place using Islamabad as the spring board for the purpose, when there was the beginning of the Bangladesh crisis.

Since the time of Johnson administration, there grew a feeling that the republicans were more friendly to Pakistan, therefore Nixon's election was viewed in favour of Rawalpindi.\(^{31}\) Moreover, Nixon was particularly known for his pro-Pakistan attitude. Even when Nixon was the Vice President during Eisenhower's administration he helped to consolidate US-Pakistan alliance. Previously when he was sent to India and Pakistan to examine the situation he gave a favourable impression about the Pakistani leaders, and also recommended military assistance to Pakistan not only for strengthening the anti-communist bloc but also to build up a counter force to the confirmed neutralism of Jawaharlal Nehru's India.\(^{32}\)

So, when Nixon became the President, his past impression about Pakistan continued to influence his policy. For example, his personal liking for Pakistan and dislike of India conditioned US policy in 1971. William J. Barnds puts it, "Nixon's warmer attitude towards Pakistan as Vice President had not completely cooled during the intervening years."\(^{33}\) As a matter of

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\(^{30}\) Ibid., p.853.

\(^{31}\) Ibid., pp.119-20.


fact, the personal factors were more important than Nixon's China policy. Although the senior officials of the State Department argued that the other sources like Romania or Japan could be utilized as other channels, Nixon and Kissinger opted Islamabad as the only channel for opening with China. Van Hollen had also argued that for China openings, the US could have used the option of the Romania channel instead of Pakistan.34

However, US's new China policy suited Pakistan very well, particularly Z.A. Bhutto, who was waiting for such an opportunity. Pakistan had friendly relations with both China and US, but it was mainly the Vietnam war, as Bhutto thought which kept these two allies of Pakistan apart.

Therefore, in the perspective of US's new China policy, Nixon's personal liking of Pakistan, the liberation war of Bangladesh saw Nixon-Kissinger's policy tilt towards West Pakistan much against the wishes of Congress, press and the domestic opinion. Nixon did not squeeze Yahya Khan (military regime of Pakistan) at the time,35 in spite of strong arm tactics of the Pakistani military against East Pakistan. Apart from US's new China policy, there were other three reasons responsible for the US support to West Pakistan during the liberation war of East Pakistan.


First, US was not in favour of dismemberment of Pakistan. In their view, dismemberment of Pakistan would have weakened Pakistan and made India sole power in South Asia. United Pakistan was considered as a balancing force against India. Second, the US military alliance like SEATO and CENTO with Pakistan during 1950s was opposed by a section of East Pakistan led by Maulana Bhasani. On question of alliance with US, the main party of East Pakistan underwent a split against the will of Suhrawardy. It would not have alliance with US. Third during post-Second World War era, third world countries achieved independence. Though these countries in the beginning adopted democratic form of government but later on some of them due to their inner contradictions fell under military regimes or communism. US supported military regimes fearing spread of communism. Fearing that after independence, even East Pakistan would be tilted towards left due to its democratic nature, US supported military regime of West Pakistan instead of liberation movement.

However the brutal killings highlighted by the press created a worldwide public sympathy for Bangladesh. Even the US Press and the people had deep concern and sympathy. The US ambassador in India while commenting on the events in East Pakistan objected to the US government's silence. Some of the congressman also took the atrocities very seriously.

36 A Compilation of the eye-witness accounts from the press can be found in Fazulul Quaderi (ed.). Bangladesh Genocide And World Press (Dacca: Alexandra Press, 1972).

37 See National Herald, 20 April, 1971.
There was also strong pressure from the members of the opposition
democratic party in the US Senate. They argued that Pakistan by using guns,
tanks and aircrafts on the people, is violating the agreements.\(^{36}\) Despite the
pleas of US Consul General in Dhaka with regard to East Pakistan that United
States should side with East Pakistan, the US government chose West
Pakistan.\(^{39}\) As it has been stated that soon after the military crackdown, the
US concluded that "Psychologically, the concept of a United Pakistan is dead
in Bengal", even then the US supported Pakistan's integrity which went
against the interest of East Pakistan."\(^{40}\)

Thus the US administration faced a dilemma in deciding its Pakistan
policy. There was pressure from all the sides on its humanitarian duty to
speak out against this brutality. But US was not in a position to antagonize
China and Pakistan. Kissinger once admitted that, "Nixon and I were
profoundly grateful for Pakistan's role as a channel to China".\(^{41}\) However,

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\(^{36}\) Norman D. Palmer, "The United States and New Order in Asia", *Current

\(^{39}\) A.M.A. Muhith, *American Response to Bangladesh Liberation War* (Dhaka:

\(^{40}\) Roeded Khan, *The American Papers: Secret and Confidential 517* (India,
Pakistan, Bangladesh Documents, 1965-1973) Introduced by Jamshed
995, p.22.

\(^{41}\) Henry Kissinger, n.35, p.849. He also observed more explicitly. The US
could not condone a brutal military repression in which thousands of civilian
were killed and million fled to India for safe. There was no doubt about the
strong arm tactics of the Pak military...But Pakistan was our sole channel to
China, once it was close off, it would take months to make alternative
arrangements, p.854.
seeing the growing pressures, the US simply asked the Pakistan government to take every feasible step to end conflict in East Pakistan and achieve peaceful accommodation. The US also attempted a political solution so that normal conditions could be restored for the refugees to return and that a war between India and Pakistan could be avoided.

Humanitarian Aspect

Concerning humanitarian problem of the civil war, the US government addressed it generously while making an all out attempt to alleviate the sufferings of the people. Almost after the beginning of the crisis, the US State Department took note of the human tragedy, expressed concern over the loss of lives and damages caused by the military in East Pakistan and pledged relief and assistance to the victims. President Nixon's remarks at a news conference in 1972 is worth mentioning. According to him, "with regard to the problem of Bengali people, first let me say that on the humanitarian side as you know both before the war, during the war, and after the war, the United States has been the most generous of all the nations." 42 Even during the war period, the US State Department hoped that a peaceful conditions could be reestablished in the East Pakistan and said that the US was naturally concerned at the reported loss of lives, hardships and damages suffered by

the people. The spokesman indicated that the US would give sympathetic consideration to any humanitarian effort.43

The US government contributed to the UN relief programs as well as bilaterally to alleviate the sufferings of the victims and refugees. On 20 June, the Secretary of State William Rogers announced that "the US government would provide an additional $70 million to assist India to meet the burden imposed upon it by the presence of very large number of refugees from East Pakistan."44 While reviewing the American contribution Maurice J. Williams, Deputy Administrator of the Agency for International Development and the US Coordinator for East Pakistan made the following statements: "up to now our government has provided $83.2 million in assistance of which $35.5 million has been in cash to meet the non-food needs and $47.7 million has been for foods".45 President Nixon himself pointed out that the relief program was an effort to gain the needed time for a political process to work.

Political Aspects

In the meantime the US made several attempts to establish contacts with the exiles in Calcutta. In December 1971, Kissinger disclosed to the media that the US was trying to arrange negotiations between the Pakistanis and the members of the Awami League, specially approved by Mujib, who


44 Department of State Bulletin, 19 July 1971, p.82.

45 Department of State Bulletin, 1 November 1971, p.500.
was in prison. However, it was clear to the US administration that agreement between the two wings could be reached only on the basis of some form of autonomy for East Pakistan. It should be remembered that the US had been aware of the economic disparity that existed between the two wings and Islamabad's policy of misusing funds of the East Pakistan. For that purpose Washington had put some pressure on Pakistan to adopt a policy which could ensure the economic development of the Eastern region. In his report to the Congress in 1972, Nixon pointed out that after the 1965 war, the US government's aid to Pakistan was "for encouraging and promoting development in East Pakistan." These policies, however, aroused Pakistani suspicions against the US. The US sympathetic policy is also evident by the fact that Nixon obtained assurances from Yahya regarding safeguarding Mujib's life and had also secured Pakistan's promise that it would never be the first to go to war. The US government also promoted the idea of posting UN observers in East Pakistan and on Indian side to ward off a possible clash.

Role of Other Major Powers

The brutality of East Pakistan brought mixed reactions from the super powers. The Soviet Union openly denounced Pakistan army action in East Pakistan. The Soviet President sent a letter to Yahya Khan calling for an end to the military repression in East Pakistan and asked for a political solution.

Nixon pointed out in his report to the Congress in February 1972.

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However, despite this strong letter, the Soviet Union was not making any overt gestures of support to the Bangladeshi movement. The Soviet Union later on, changed its early perception regarding the struggle of people of Bangladesh.\(^{47}\)

The first official Chinese response to the crisis was basically a reaction to Indian interference with Pakistan's internal affairs. It did not publicly condemn the Pakistani military repression. However, Chinese military aid to Pakistan during the crisis was not significant. But Chinese verbal support for Pakistan took an aggressive tone when the war broke out. China vehemently criticized India and Soviet Union for their evil design to establish Indian hegemony in the region.\(^{48}\)

India was greatly alarmed by the Sino-US détente, since it perceived China as the greatest threat to its security since the Sino-Indian war of 1962. Moreover, the Chinese support to Pakistan and emerging Washington-Beijing-Islamabad axis was perceived by India as an impending threat to its own security and a great obstacle to the Bangladesh cause. India at this moment found herself alone. Subsequently India was pushed to Soviet Union and entered in an alliance with USSR and finally signed a treaty with Moscow on 19 August 1971. This treaty was described by Kissinger as a

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"bombshell". This treaty was concluded at a historical juncture when India demonstrated "a renewed willingness to develop a cooperative relationship with the United States." According to the New York Times editorial, the treaty was likely to make India bolder in her support for Bengali liberation army and thus increase the danger of Indo-Pakistan clashes. The Chinese representative at the United Nations (UN) Security Council, Huang Hua, described the treaty as "a treaty of military alliance", and said, "with the encouragement of the treaty, the Indian government has become even more embroiled in carrying out expansion and aggression. Thus in the light of above treaty Moscow-New Delhi-Dhaka axis emerged. There was no doubt that it was a common understanding between New Delhi and Moscow on the issue of Bangladesh. Here it should be noted that these alliances were political rather ideological.

While the Soviet Union sided with India on this issue, China gave full support to Pakistan. China regarded the Bangladesh problem entirely an internal affair of Pakistan and condemned India's interference in this matter.

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49 Henry Kissinger, n.35, p.866.
50 Christopher van Hallen, p.344.
53 The Chinese attitude was clearly stated in an article published in People's Daily, 11 April 1971, ibid., p.182.
Later on China increased its military and economic aid to Pakistan during this time as a measure of support for the Yahya regime.

Thus with the Soviet Union and India taking one side and China and Pakistan taking the other, the position of the United States during the Bangladesh movement became critical mainly because the period coincided with US's efforts opening with China. It seems that while the US policy makers took a grim view of Indo-Soviet intentions they were merely oblivious of the activities of Bengali freedom fighters. However the US opposed the liberation of Bangladesh, even though it was giving humanitarian help through UN agencies. On the other hand, the USSR openly threatened the US and China in favour of India. In sum, with the threat and counter-threat the issue of East Pakistan led to a war between India and Pakistan in December 1971 involving indirectly all the three superpowers.

**US's Gunboat Diplomacy in South Asia**

Emergence of this war gave the opportunity not only India and Pakistan to flex their muscles rather superpower also took active steps. Tensions in the sub-continent had gone up when during the last stage of Indo-Pakistan confrontation, the US President Nixon ordered the Nuclear Carrier US's Enterprise to the direction of Bay of Bengal under Admiral Moorer. US official spokesman emphasized that the task force's main
mission was to evacuate American citizens from Dhaka.\textsuperscript{54} However, according to Anderson Reports, this was to compel India to divert both ships and planes, to weaken India's blocked against East Pakistan, to divert Indian air craft carrier Vikrant from its military mission and to force India to keep place on defense alert, thus reducing their oppressions against Pakistani ground troops. The Report further wrote that, "the evacuation of American citizens was strictly the secondary mission adopted more as the justification then the reason for the naval move."\textsuperscript{55}

Some American analysts described the Enterprise mission as a move to court China's friendship. However Nixin's Memoirs refer, there were three considerations behind the dispatch: first, Nixon felt deceived because Indira Gandhi assured him that India was not motivated in anyway by anti-Pakistan attitude. Second, the Soviet Union had ignored several clear signals from the US that the latter could react very unfavourably in case of an invasion of Pakistan by Soviet than India. Third, the President learned through intelligence sources that the Indian cabinet had planned to expand the war on the western front.\textsuperscript{56} In response, the Soviet Union also sent its fleet to the

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., p.56.
Indian ocean.\textsuperscript{57} China on its part, was also mobilizing its troops along the Sino-Indian border. Thus by all these, while the valiant and undaunted youths of the Bengali Mukti Bahini (Liberation Army) were fighting for national independent the big powers brought the world dangerously close to the edge of another world war.

\textbf{The another Battlefield: UNO}

Once the Indo-Pakistan war broke out on the Bangladesh issue, it was referred to the UN. In the emergency session of the Security Council held on 4 December 1971, the US submitted a resolution calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of troops.\textsuperscript{58} The Soviet representative, Jacob Malik, opposed this resolution on the ground that the problem of East Pakistan should be solved first. The Chinese representative, Huang Hua, however stated that "the question of East Pakistan is purely an internal affair of Pakistan. No one has the right to interfere in it."\textsuperscript{59} After much controversy the US draft was put to vote, but it was promptly vetoed by the Soviet Union. The Soviet veto gave India the necessary time to carry on its military operations and it was therefore supported both by India and the Bangladesh government.

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\textsuperscript{57} M.G. Kabir, n.48, p.189.
\textsuperscript{58} For the text of the resolution, see UN Document S/PV 1606, Security Council Official Records (1606\textsuperscript{th} Meeting, New York, 1 December 1971), pp.8-10.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., p.22.
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After the veto of the US proposal, which was designed to save Pakistan from dismemberment, an almost similar draft resolution was moved by the Chinese. While the operative part of the Chinese draft was similar to that of the US (cease-fire and troops withdrawal), it had more pronounced anti-Indian overtones than the American proposal. The Chinese draft asked all countries "to support the Pakistan people in their just struggle to resist Indian aggression" and proposed immediate cease-fire and withdrawal of forces. However none of the resolutions could be accepted because of the lack of unanimity among the permanent members. On 7 December, the General Assembly adopted a resolution in favour of immediate cease-fire and troops withdrawal. While Pakistan accepted this recommendation, India and Bhutan, along with nine communist countries, opposed it.

On 12 December the Security Council met again on American request. And the US representative, George Bush, moved a draft resolution in which Pakistan's acceptance of the General Assembly resolution and India's rejection were noted and India was called upon to accept cease-fire immediately in compliance with the General Assembly resolution. The US resolution was again vetoed by the Soviet Union on 13 December. On 16

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December the issue was, however, settled on the battlefield with the surrender of the Pakistani forces in Bangladesh.

RELATIONSHIP DURING MUJIB ERA: FROM HOSTILITY TO RECONCILIATION

Independence of Bangladesh, changed the power equations in the South Asia. One side, It was a victory of the Indo-Soviet policy and on the other side, It was a clear blow to USA’s South Asia strategy policy to contain influence of USSR, and to keep Pakistan united. Since these two powers (USSR and India) played a leading role in the freedom struggle of Bangladesh, recognition of Bangladesh from these two countries came instantly. India was the first regional power recognizing the new Independent state, while the Soviet Union was first among the big powers. Officially the Awami league government took the power on 16th Dec 1971 but India’s recognition was even before i.e on 6th Dec 1971. The soviet Union granted recognition on 21 January 1972. Recognition from other powers like the USA China and Pakistan were really evoked much interest and speculations. While Pakistan and China were hostile towards Bangladesh, Nixon’s policy during the civil war period led many political observers to rule out immediate US recognition to the country. Therefore under the Indo-Soviet influence and

In the words of a scholar "the Bangladesh episode has shown not merely a failure of American policy in South Asia but also revealed a credibility gap in the US administration’s ability for crisis management". See J.K.Naik, *India, Russia, chains and Bangladesh* (S.Chand and company, New Delhi, 1972), p.106.
facing hostility from USA, China and Pakistan, area of concern for Bangladesh's leadership were.\textsuperscript{63}

1. Diplomatic recognition of Bangladesh by the independent states of the world and the full membership of the UNO and other such organization.

2. Withdrawal of Indian troops and settlement of many vexed issues.


After the independence, Bangladesh adopted political system prevailing in India. It was a direct outcome of Mujib's attraction towards principles India believed in and on the other hand India's influence and role in independence of Bangladesh. Immediately after the return from Pakistan in January 1972, Mujib had declared that Bangladesh was to have special ties with India. In a speech at Calcutta on 6\textsuperscript{th} February 1972 he said, "I have no doubt that India our next door neighbour will proudly march on as the largest democracy, secularism and socialism at home and non alignment in international relations.\textsuperscript{64} The Awami League government officially announced that," friendship with India is a cornerstone of the foreign policy of Bangladesh.\textsuperscript{65} As a result of this tilt towards India, Bangladesh followed many


\textsuperscript{64} Bangladesh speaks: A collection of speeches and statements made by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (External Publicity Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Bangladesh) P.32

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Bangladesh Progress 1972} (Department of Publications, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of the people's Republic of Bangladesh) P.52.
Ideals of Indian foreign policy for example, non alignment, peaceful coexistence and opposition to colonialism, racialism and imperialism in any form. Therefore, Bangladesh was deeply committed to anti imperialism as it had already experienced the interests of these powers on whose military and political support Pakistan had carried out exploitation of Bangladesh.

Since the former Soviet Union had also played significant role in the Independence of Bangladesh, Russians were keen to expand soviet influence in South Asia directly as well as through India. It is also evident by the fact that the soviet not only supported India's Bangladesh policy during the war but also quickly finalised the bilateral and diplomatic relations. The chief motive behind its interest was Bangladesh's geographical proximity to China. Under Soviet Influence, Mujib also announced the nationalization of the key sectors on the pattern of the Moscow, for example, nationalization of all Banks, insurance companies, jute, textile and sugar industries.  

As the USA, China and Pakistan were still to recognize Bangladesh, the friendship with India and Soviet Union proved both politically and economically beneficial. During the early years of independence, conditions within Bangladesh were very hostile towards the USA and consequently American influence was completely removed from the country. Tajuddin Ahmed then the acting Prime Minister of Bangladesh ruled out the possibility of any cooperation with USA by saying that "the question of seeking

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economic aid from the Americans does not arise at all and it is absurd too".67 Even though Mujib and his Awami league had a pro-western background, during 1954-55, when opposition developed in Pakistan over its alliance with the USA, the pro-western faction led by Suhrawardy and Mujib supported the alliance. In fact, as the country had adopted non-alignment and socialism, it had brought Bangladesh close to India and Soviet Union. Tajuddin who was appointed as Minister in-charge of Finance and Planning was anti-American largely influenced the government decisions to run the country along socialist lines. Tajuddin Ahmed also issued a number of statements rejecting possible aid offers from the West, specially from the USA.68

It was Nixon administration's policy during the Bangladesh crisis of 1971 which brought US Bangladesh relationship troublesome. A majority of Bengalis hope for solid US support during their struggle were however frustrated by the US official policy, specially when the crisis culminated in the Indo-Pak war. From then until the early years of independence there was a wide gap in the US-Bangladesh relationship. However, it was during Mujib's period, that slowly and gradually the relations between these two countries started soaring. These emerging relations can be seen with the socio-economic conditions of Bangladesh. The creation of Bangladesh saw the turbulent economy and the paucity of food and money

which not only led to widespread discontentment among the people but also guaranteed political corruption and evil practices. This economic crisis not only made the country heavily dependent upon the rich nations for its survival but also led to the formation of a foreign policy oriented towards a goal of maximization of economic assistance. Thus the economic compulsion placed Bangladesh in a position to accept anything from any quarter irrespective of its political and ideological principles. Mujib had declared "I need help from all the nations of the world." 69

The economic conditions of the Bangladesh however, provided Washington an opportunity to enter as a friendly power. Though Bangladesh maintained close relations' with India and Soviet Union, economic aid from these two countries were not sufficient to meet its need. In fact, the US was the only country, which was in a position to meet Bangladesh requirements. It may be recalled that the economic channel between Washington and Dhaka had always remained alive. 70 Despite their diplomatic hostility and even during the war, the US had provided large economic relief to the country through the UN, although diplomatically it tried to prevent the breakup of Pakistan. Even during the period when Bangladesh had no diplomatic relation with the US, Dhaka received $119 million American aid. The economic factor therefore provided a positive rationale for the US to legitimize its relations.

69 Quoted in The Economist, 16 January 1972.

There were several projects in Bangladesh financed and promoted by US were lying incomplete. For development of Bangladesh economy, completion of these projects was necessary. In view of this scenario Mujib government tried to reestablish lost link with the USA.

The American assistance especially to Bangladesh and particularly to third world country have been successfully convincing the United states public opinion and the congress about the vital aspects of promotion of US interest against the spread of communism. H.B. Chanery has wrote, "the main objective of the foreign assistance of US is to produce the kind of political and economic environment in the world in which the US can best pursue its foreign policy goal. The second objective is to create internal stability, which is sought by giving politically popular type of aid to existing governments for the prevention of internal disorders."\(^1\)

The official recognition from the US was somewhat delayed because of Washington's determination not to impair its relations with China and Pakistan. In early February 1972 Nixon said," with regard to the political side, we have under study our whole relations with the subcontinent and as a part of that relationship, of course, the 70 million people of Bangladesh are involved. We have not made a decision with regard to recognition, and you

should not expect a decision prior to the time I return from China." It was thus apparent, that the administration was still giving top priority to its China policy. The delay in recognition was also due to the direct orders of President Nixon that American recognition was contingent upon the withdrawal of Indian troops from Bangladesh. The Indian troops were withdrawn only in March 1972 and thus, there came a positive response from the US side. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State on 6 March 1972, gave a statement, "Insofar as the question of the recognition of Bangladesh is concerned, this matter is under active review but no decision has been taken." He also gave the wording of President Nixon who said, "We are going to do everything that we can develop a new relationship with the countries on the subcontinent that will be pro-Indian, pro-Bengalis and pro-Pakistan but mostly pro-peace." It was only 4 April 1972 that the Secretary of State William Rogers announced that "the question of recognition of Bangladesh has now been completed and I am pleased to announce this morning that the US government extending recognition to Bangladesh." On the same day President Nixon sent a letter to Mujib stating that, "I wish to inform you that the US government has

72 See Nixon's news conference on 10 February in Department of state Bulletin, 6 March 1972, P. 292.


74 Ibid.

recognized the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh and that we would like to establish diplomatic relations at the embassy level with your government. Historically there had been warm ties with your people. I make sure that the friendship will be further strengthened in the coming years...."76

After the US's recognition to Bangladesh, China now remained the only major power to withhold recognition to the new state. It may be pointed out that there are two factors, which compelled the US to go in that direction. One was the US anxiety over the growing Indian and Soviet influence in the subcontinent. Nixon's administration thought that the rising Soviet influence would give an upper hand to communism in South Asia. There were always pressure from the Congress to improve the relations.

With the granting of recognition the US could now start its own bilateral aid programs for the new nations. Earlier it had to send relief assistance to Bangladesh through the UN, but now Bangladesh could expect aid and assistance from the US directly. The US made available over $71 million for non-food items and nearly $78 million under Public Law-480 to meet the immediate requirement of the country.77 In May 1972, the US signed the first bilateral agreement with Bangladesh providing $90 million of American

assistance to Bangladesh. This agreement was designed to provide maximum flexibility and speed in the use of the funds to meet the priority needs of Bangladesh for reconstruction and rehabilitation. These funds were to be used for the import of commodities such as cotton, tallow, pesticides and fertilizers, as well as for financing high priority projects such as coastal embankment construction for production against flooding, restoration of power supplies, rebuilding of road and bridges. This agreement marked a new phase in US-Bangladesh relations following the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In June 1972, the US signed another agreement granting $25 million. Recognition thus boosted the allotment of funds in quick succession for the relief and reconstruction of Bangladesh. However, these were merely the beginnings of a series of aid programs that the country received from the US, which subsequently became its largest donor. A report issued on 2 August 1972, on the first six months of US relief assistance to Bangladesh indicated the total US contribution was $267.5 million, which was one-third of the combined contributions of all donor nations. Bangladesh became a leading recipient of US economic assistance and by 1973 the US had become

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79 For the Text of the AID Report, see Department of State Bulletin, 28 August 1972, p.231.
Bangladesh's biggest source of assistance and US aid program totalled over $318 million.\textsuperscript{80}

The recognition secured for Bangladesh not only an assurance of economic aid but also membership in the UN and repatriation of the Bengalis then in Pakistan. Moreover, in a short time, Bangladesh with the US support secured the membership of several world bodies like the IMF, World Bank, WHO and others.\textsuperscript{81} Bangladesh in its first appearance at annual meeting of IMF and World Bank had asked for more aid to build its war torn economy. Bangladesh Finance Minister said, "The socio-political objectives of Bangladesh are to build a socialist economy. The main focus is on a significant role for the public sector in economic activities."\textsuperscript{82}

Bangladesh's entry into the United Nations was stalled by the open hostility of China. China's stance to preserve Pakistani interest remained unchanged on question of recognition of Bangladesh. Bangladesh application of membership was initiated to the UN Security Council on 8 August 1972. India, USSR, UK and Yugoslavia asked for immediate admission of Bangladesh but China in a separate resolution rejected by saying that Bangladesh did not fulfill certain obligations particularly the repatriation of Pakistani prisoner of war. The Council voting took place on 26

\textsuperscript{80} Figures are quoted from the \textit{New York Times}, 10 March 1973.

\textsuperscript{81} For a list of the world organizations to which Bangladesh was admitted in 1972, See Bangladesh Progress, n.4, p.57.

\textsuperscript{82} \textit{Bangladesh Observer}, 30 September 1972.
August where the US voted in favour of the resolution along with eleven other members. However, despite the support of two superpowers the Chinese veto put the issue into cold storage temporarily. The US representative Christopher in the UN Security Council made a statement, "my delegation regrets that this Council has been unable to agree on a recommendation on the admission of Bangladesh to the UN." Later on under the changed circumstances, when the outstanding problems between the three countries of the subcontinents were largely solved, the Security Council recommended Bangladesh admission on 10 June 1974. This time China did not veto rather simply abstained from voting and the US in accordance with its policy of friendship with Bangladesh once again supported the admission. Expressing his satisfaction over the admission the US deputy representative at the UN noted that, "Bangladesh has over the past two and half years clearly demonstrated its dedication to the ideals and to the Charter of this organization."

Decline of Indo-Soviet Popularity

Immediately after independence India and Soviet Union were regarded as most important friends of Bangladesh. Various agreements were signed between the Bangladesh and USSR in connection with trade, financial assistance and cultural activities. The most significant indication of this

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84 Department of State Bulletin, 8 July 1974, pp.73-74.
friendship was the official visit by the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to Moscow only two months after he had assumed office in March 1972. But this cordial relationship soon began to change. As the Soviet Union was unable to follow the type of demands nurtured by the ruling chiefs of Bangladesh it began to lose its influence.

Bangladesh-India relations also experienced similar changes. Indo-Bangladesh relations deteriorated with the exposure of the malevolent design of Indian capital vis-à-vis the commercial interests and financial interests of the ruling elite of Bangladesh.

The opposition parties protested against the Awami League government leaning towards India which according to many Bangladesh were against the national sentiments. Even the 25 years friendship treaty, which was signed between these two states was seen suspiciously. In June 1973 the Indian trade delegations to Dhaka was disturbed by Maulani Basani who organized a hartal and went on fast, demanding for the end of the said treaty. Mujib seeing the rising anti-Indian tie, went ahead to join the Commonwealth and to develop trade and close relations with Britain, thus was his attempt to counter balance the influence of India and Russia.

The anti-Indian feeling was in such a high state that India was also blamed for deteriorating Bangladesh economy. Indian manufacture and old

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trade agreement between India and Bangladesh were considered in the interest of India rather than Bangladesh. The hardliners gave the slogans that the food scarcity is due to India, India is taking away everything and after Pakistan it is Indian imperialism which was hard hitting the country. This changing environment was noted by an Indian journalist, "complained that the Indian army had demanded Bangladesh factories and had taken with them all valuable can be heard even in posh drawing rooms and when prices soar, India is blamed squarely for it, suggesting that the border smuggling is responsible for this." Thus, it is not only the prices of essential commodities were touching the sky but the deteriorating economy also affected the country's foreign exchange reserve. And for all these it was government which came under heavy fire for soft policy towards India. Although India had given considerable aid, but it did not gain much political benefits for India. The decline of India's popularity thus created favourable conditions for the US influence to grow.

Right from the beginning, China had been against the creation of Bangladesh and the entry of Bangladesh to the to the UN. But later on a large chunk of population became pro-Chinese. These pro-Chinese elements provided major opposition to the Awami League government. Serious opposition came from Moulana Bhasani who organized anti-India and pro-

66 "Even before a single kilogram of fish came to India from Bangladesh, rumours were spread that fish prices had gone up because of export to India." See Arun Bhattacharya, Dateline Mujibnagar (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1973), p.217.
Chinese platform and further pressured the government to do away the total dependence upon India and Soviet Union. These emerging political pressures brought major difficulties before Mujib and his government to take crucial policies. While Bangladesh could not alienate India and the Soviet Union since they were sponsoring its membership in the UN, it could not annoy the Chinese despite latter's hostility towards the new state.\textsuperscript{87} Bangladesh on repeated occasions expressed the desire to establish its relations with China. Subsequently, however, China gradually modified its stand on Bangladesh with the considerable erosion of Indo-Soviet influence in the country and Mujib's willingness to diversify his country's foreign relations. In 1973 China, out of way, supported Bangladesh's membership to the ECAFE and FAO despite objection from Pakistan. These changing Sino-Bangladesh relations no doubt also suited Washington, which could now adopt a more positive approach in its relations with Dhaka without antagonizing China.

As far as the differences among more important political parties in Bangladesh are concerned, it is worth to mention here that all left parties — the Nationalist Awami Party of Muzaffar Ahmad (NAP:M); the Nationalist Awamy Party of Bhasani (NAP:B) and the Communist Party of Bangladesh — were trying to consolidate tactical and strategic positions in the post-

\textsuperscript{87} For some of Bangladesh's early attempts to placate China, see A.L. Khatib, "Mujib sets a Limit on gratitude", \textit{Far Eastern Economic Review}, 1 April 1972, p.14.
independent period owing to changing international and domestic scenes. Although some of the left parties like NAP-M and Communist party still sided with Moscow as they thought Soviet Union had sided with Bengali aspiration. Though liberation war was led by Awami League as the legal elected body which however refused to share power with any party. This created a fishy conditions later on which gave an opportunity to the pro-Chinese party to criticize the ruling party of its policy towards India and Moscow.

Within the Awami League there was a power struggle between pro-western Khondokar Mushtaq Ahmed and pro-Indo-Soviet Tajuddin Ahmed during Mujib's absence. Khondakar lost his portfolio of the ministry of the Foreign Affairs for his alleged western leanings and his alleged attempts to use the American connections during the liberation war, for a political solution of the crisis.

However, during the Mujib's period the emergence of pro-Islamic elements helped the USA to play more role and put pressures upon the Awami League government to normalize relations with Pakistan. Immediately after the independence the pro-Islamic group gained strength with the rise of anti-Indian sentiments and pro-Pakistani and pro-Chinese role. All these pressures inside the political arena were in favour of the USA. In the annual foreign policy report issued by the state department, William Rogers made it clear that the USA would maintain its strong support for the viability and cohesion of Pakistan because of our long standing relationship and because
of its importance to the stability of the entire region. While all these factors brought about a steady decline of the Indo-Soviet influence in the Bangladesh, severe economic problems that also affected the domestic political stability compelled the country to move towards the USA. The year 1974 was important for Bangladesh due to the famine and starvation. At that time Mujib explored the new avenues for assistance. He also appeased the USA which was now Bangladesh's foremost donor. Mujib's pro-American stance at this time can be seen by the incident when Tajuddin was forced to resign from the cabinet prior to Kissinger's visit at Dhaka. Tajuddin was seen as a major problem in the development of US-Bangladesh relations. Thus, since 1974, the Americans became the leading diplomatic partners. Bangladesh received much needed assurance from the US and President Ford pointed out US's willingness and interest to assist Bangladesh. Following this rapprochement US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger visited Bangladesh in October-November 1974. At a press conference he said, "we have no difficulties with Bangladesh" and reaffirmed that the USA would do every thing possible to help Bangladesh to achieve her long term goals.69

Though Bangladesh was gradually moving away from the Indo-Soviet influence, the USA now wanted country to proceed directly towards its own bloc. Thus, towards the end of Mujib period, Bangladesh foreign policy came

69 The Text of the Joint Communique can be found in Morning News, 31 October 1974.
under increasing pressure from many sides. One member of Planning Commission of Bangladesh, Rehman Sobhan maintained in his article that "there was evidence of a major effort by the USA to use its food aid as a direct instrument for political pressure." Moreover, as the for biggest donors of aid the USA was in a position to exercise major political and economic leverage in the country. It should be mentioned that during the 1974 famine the US suspended its food aid to Bangladesh because the latter started exporting jute to Cuba. This decision was taken in concert with FL480 regulations where a recipient country cannot trade with black-listed countries like Cuba. With limited options in hand, Bangladesh cancelled all shipments to Cuba and refined its policy.

Now it is clear that Bangladesh had drifted away though not completely from Indo-Soviet influence and accepted much aid from the USA. But economic condition of Bangladesh was in a state of complete chaos. Even the heavy inflow of foreign aid could not stop the socio-economic deterioration which created major pressure upon the political system of the country. To control this worsening condition Mujib adopted an authoritarian constitution invoking a Presidential type of government in January 1975. This led to the rejection of democratic government, suppression of freedom of

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90 Rehman Sobhan, "Politics of Food and Famine in Bangladesh", Economic and Political Weekly, 1 December 1979, p.197. Discussion on the political pressures that came along with the aid from US has been made in Chapter V.

press, and a large violation of human life which no doubt had a negative effect on Bangladesh relations with the West particularly with the US. Not only opposition political parties were banned but Mujib introduced one party system. The Awami League was turned into a larger grouping called the BAKSAL (Bangladesh Krishak Sramik Awami League), which was also linked to the two pro-Moscow parties NAP(M) and CPB. This no doubt alarmed the policy makers in Washington. It was felt that Bangladesh under one party system would follow the East European pattern and thus would be firmly saddled to Soviet orbit. Under that scenario according to Washington, Sheikh Mujib would have no effective control of the affairs and real power would be transferred to Sheikh Moni, the nephew of Mujib who is a protegee of Moscow as it happened in Czechoslovakia in 1968 where communists seized power.

It is worth-mentioning here that Soviet Union actively encouraged the formation of one party and was confident that Sheikh Moni would eventually succeed Mujib. From Soviet point of view after the fall of Vietnam, Bangladesh was inclined to join the Soviet axis openly. As regarding Indian reaction this was to be neutralized under Indo-Soviet umbrella in the subcontinent. This was the scenario which Washington dreaded most. However, the new situation created by Mujib did not last long because on 15 August 1975, there was a coup in which Mujib was killed.

The cause behind the coup, brutal assassination of Mujib, his family members as well as his associates became a mystery. While administrative corruptions and inefficiency were thought as the important reason behind the
killing but some has described it as the discontentment among the army against the Sheikh. No doubt the corruptions are the common phenomena to all newly independent countries of the Third World and Bangladesh was certainly not an exception to it. However, Mujib measures in the last two years amounted to a permanent emergency rule and instead of solving the country's problems created further dissatisfaction. The popular discontent and general disillusionment with the Mujib regime however may be the major reason behind the coup. But there is another opinion which suspects foreign powers especially the US for master-minding the coup. There are many who contend that Kissinger never forgave Mujib for threatening to upset his major global realignment program in 1971.92 It was also allged that the USA was using its aid as a political weapon to bring Bangladesh under its control, but a major breakthrough was not possible as Mujib and his left oriented Awami League controlled the government. Hence, Kissinger maintained close links with the pro-American group of Mushtaq Ahmed who took over power after the coup and on the basis of these contacts it is believed that the USA had prior knowledge of the coup that killed Mujib.93 Now it has been asserted that


93 On the basis of some first hand documentary evidence, an interesting study has been made on the possible USA involvement in the coup by Lawrence and Kai Bird, "Kissinger Bangladesh Sideshow", The Nation, 21 June 1980, pp.745-51.
"ample evidence is now available to show that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was murdered by domestic reactionaries in alliance with forces of international relation."\textsuperscript{94} However, these changes are not yet proved.